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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SHANGHAI 000214

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KIRF](#) [CH](#) [VT](#)  
SUBJECT: SHANGHAI BISHOP JIN ON CHINA-VATICAN TIES

REF: A) VATICAN 61; B) 2006 SHANGHAI 7097

CLASSIFIED BY: Kenneth Jarrett, Consul General, , U.S.  
Consulate Shanghai.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: During a Consul General hosted lunch on April 13, Shanghai Bishop Jin said that Catholics in China were anxiously awaiting the Pope's letter (ref A). He hoped that the letter would not be too strident as this would lead to a strong reaction from Beijing and push the Vatican-China relationship backwards. He warned against putting too much emphasis on the words of Hong Kong Cardinal Zen and noted that the Cardinal did not speak for Catholics in China. Auxiliary Bishop Xing accompanied Bishop Jin to the lunch and appeared to be more comfortable in his role as Bishop Jin's successor. Bishop Jin continued to be active and was currently working on his memoir. He said that while he took medication to manage his diabetes, his heart condition was stable. End Summary.

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Anxiously Awaiting Papal Letter  
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12. (C) On April 13, Consul General hosted a lunch for Shanghai Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian to discuss religious developments in China. Auxiliary Bishop Xing, Pol/Econ Chief and Poloff also attended the lunch. Bishop Jin said Catholics were waiting anxiously for the Pope to release his letter to the Catholics of China. (See Ref. A.) He worried that if the letter was too strident and forceful, Beijing would react very strongly and reject the letter. This would move the Vatican-China relationship backwards. Thus, hoped that the letter would be more conciliatory and provide an opportunity for progress in the relationship.

13. (C) Bishop Jin, however, was not optimistic that there would be an improvement in the relationship. According to Bishop Jin, Chinese leaders were too focused on other issues and allowed mid-level leaders to manage the issue of religion in China. Most mid-level leaders were afraid of taking initiatives and, therefore, were only interested in maintaining the status quo on religion. He added that Beijing was also still concerned that religious groups could overthrow the government. He said the Chinese government should not view Catholics as a threat as there were very few Catholics in China. Less than one percent

of China was Catholic, compared to seven percent of Vietnam, which had recently improved relations with the Vatican.

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Models for Appointment of Bishops  
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14. (C) According to Bishop Jin, there were at least three different models that could be used for the appointment of Bishops in China. He said that the Vietnam model was a good model, but was not acceptable by Beijing. In this model, the government selected a Bishop from candidates chosen by the Vatican. He said that Beijing would not want to set a precedent in which a foreign entity picked religious leaders. This could be seen as a precedent that Tibetan Buddhists might want to use for the selection of the selection of the next Dalai Lama. Another model was the one used to appoint Auxiliary Bishop Xing. According to Bishop Jin, the Vatican had selected Bishop Xing to be his successor. The Vatican did not propose any other candidates. It then took over a year for Bishop Jin to get the agreement of various levels of government, including the central government in Beijing. He noted that while he did not have to seek the permission of the Shanghai Municipal People's Congress, local municipal congresses were often involved in the process in many dioceses.

15. (C) Bishop Jin noted that the most recent ordinations followed a different model. In this model, the Chinese government informed future Bishops that they would soon be ordained and gave these Bishops time to seek Rome's approval. The Bishops then, as a first step, needed to contact the Papal Representative in Hong Kong for permission. If the Papal Representative agreed to the request, he would then forward the request to the department that handled Asia in the Vatican. From there, the request would move next to the Vatican Secretary

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of State. While the Pope would need to sign off on the appointment, it was impossible for him to know every person and, thus, he often relied on what his staff recommended. The problem with this model was that the Vatican could say no.

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Cardinal Zen Does Not Speak For Catholics In China  
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16. (C) Bishop Jin warned against putting too much emphasis on Hong Kong Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun. He said while Cardinal Zen was his friend, the Cardinal did not speak for Catholics in China nor for Catholics in Hong Kong. Because of Cardinal Zen's title he had influence on the Vatican's policy towards China, but it was not clear how much the Pope actually listened to him. He noted that Cardinal Zen talked a lot, and, perhaps, the Cardinal would have greater influence if he said less.

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Harmonious Society And Religion  
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17. (C) Bishop Jin said his biggest concern for the future was that the Catholic Church would become marginalized if there was no reconciliation with Rome and the Church continued to be split between the underground and official church. To avoid this, the church must become more active in the social arena and find a way to take advantage of situations as they arise. Bishop Jin said of all of the theories introduced by the Communist party, including Mao's emphasis on class struggle to Jiang Zemin's "three represents," Hu Jintao's introduction of the "harmonious society" concept was his favorite as it emphasized balance and reconciliation. It also provided space for religious groups to become more involved in society. Religious groups could help to build a "harmonious society" by providing social services and opening schools and hospitals. He believed that the government would allow the church to open schools and hospitals soon, perhaps in five to six years. He was worried, however, that the church would not have the ability to staff these facilities.

According to Bishop Xing, it continued to be very difficult for the Church to attract new members of the clergy. There were only 76 students at Sheshan seminary, most of them from the countryside. In addition, there were more than forty vacant Bishop positions in China.

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Xi Jinping: Position on Religion Not Clear  
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¶8. (C) Bishop Jin reacted cautiously to questions about the new Shanghai Party Secretary Xi Jinping. He said that Xi had a good relationship with religious groups in Fujian, but it was unclear what his relationship with groups was like in Zhejiang province. He added that he had met Xi's father, Xi Zhongxun, and he was a good person. Xi Zhongxun had some responsibilities for religious affairs when he served in the NPC and Bishop Jin had a relationship with him from those days.

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Comment: Auxiliary Bishop Xing Becoming More Comfortable  
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¶9. (C) Comment: Bishop Xing was much more animated and appeared to be more comfortable during this meeting than in the past. Bishop Jin relied on him for information about Sheshan seminary and also for information on recent developments, such as the illicit ordination of the Bishop in Xuzhou. Bishop Xing noted that he had also been traveling a great deal. He recently returned from Xinjiang and Yunnan where he participated in poverty alleviation projects. He would also travel to England and Germany next week on a delegation that consisted of leaders of the five main religious groups in Shanghai. The purpose of the trip was to demonstrate to other countries that different religious groups in China cooperated. Bishop Xing noted that all of his recent travels were arranged by the government and government minders often accompanied him on these trips. End Comment.

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Bishop Jin's Health  
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¶10. (C) Bishop Jin appeared physically and mentally active. He has given up learning Spanish, but was remaining active by writing his memoir. He noted that in writing his memoirs, he had to take into consideration what would be acceptable to the censors. According to Bishop Jin, his heart condition was stable and he was able to travel to meetings during the day. His doctor still insisted that he remain in Shanghai in the evenings, however, where medical care was readily available. Bishop Jin said he had diabetes and was taking shots and pills to manage his illness. Bishop Jin also took daily "sacrosanct siestas" to keep up his energy.  
JARRETT